

State-Approved Trainers—Frequently Asked Questions

What you need to know about offering training to early care & education and school-age professionals in Washington



Professional **D**evelopment **P**athways

www.del.wa.gov/requirements/professional/

1. What is the purpose of the trainer approval process?

The integrity and quality of training sets the foundation for early care & education and school-age professionals. The purpose of the new trainer approval process is to: promote quality training opportunities around the state, establish a consistent process for reviewing all trainers and ensure that all trainings are grounded in the state's core competencies and early learning guidelines.

2. Who can apply to become a state-approved trainer and when does the new approval process start?

We encourage all past STARS-approved trainers to submit applications and welcome new trainers who have not been a part of our system to date. We hope to develop a network of leaders who are committed to quality adult learning experiences for individuals who work with children and families. Trainers cannot offer STARS credits unless they are state-approved. (See timeline, page 5)

There are four levels of approved trainers, all based on a combination of education and experience. Below are the specific requirements of each trainer level in addition to the necessary documentation needed to verify qualifications:

APPRENTICE TRAINER

REQUIREMENTS	SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS
Associate's degree in early childhood education or a related field	Official transcripts from an accredited college
3 years full-time working experience in child care and/or education	Professional resume and two letters of recommendation (on organization letterhead and dated within last six months)
20 hours documented experience teaching adults	Professional resume and two letters of recommendation (on organization letterhead and dated within last six months)
Required score on professional development unit	Professional development unit submission scored by trainer approval board
Pre-service trainer requirements*	Evidence of completion of 6 online modules
15 hours of continuing education related to adult learning/early care and education/education each year or one, 3 credit college course every other year	Certificates of completion verified by MERIT
Approval Status: <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Approved to train in all Core Competency areas at levels 1 & 2.✓ Approved as an apprentice trainer for 3 years. A new application is required for renewal.	

INTERMEDIATE TRAINER

REQUIREMENTS	SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS
Baccalaureate degree in early childhood education or a related field	Official transcripts from an accredited college or university
3 years full-time working experience in child care and/or education	Professional resume and two letters of recommendation (on organization letterhead and dated within last six months)
40 hours documented experience teaching adults	Professional resume and two letters of recommendation (on organization letterhead and dated within last six months)
Required score on professional development unit	Professional development unit submission scored by Trainer Approval Board
Pre-service trainer requirements*	Evidence of completion of 6 online modules
15 hours of continuing education related to adult learning/early care and education/education each year or one, 3 credit college course every other year	Certificates of completion verified by MERIT
Approval Status: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Approved to train in all Core Competency areas at levels 1 - 4. ✓ Approved as an intermediate trainer for 3 years. A new application is required for renewal 	

ADVANCED TRAINER

REQUIREMENTS	SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS
Master's degree or higher in early childhood education or a related field	Official transcripts from an accredited college or university
1 year full-time working experience in child care and/or education	Professional resume and two letters of recommendation (on organization letterhead and dated within last six months)
40 hours documented experience teaching adults	Professional resume and two letters of recommendation (on organization letterhead and dated within last six months)
Required score on professional development unit	Professional development unit submission scored by trainer approval board
Pre-service trainer requirements*	Evidence of completion of 6 online modules
15 hours of continuing education related to adult learning/early care and education/education each year or one, 3 credit college course every other year	Certificates of completion verified by MERIT
Approval Status: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Approved to train in all Core Competency areas at levels 1 - 5. ✓ Approved as an advanced trainer for 3 years. A new application is required for renewal. 	

SPECIALIST TRAINER

REQUIREMENTS	SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS
Current license, degree, certificate or credential and/or specialized knowledge area	Demonstration of specialized knowledge area. Can be current license, degree, certificate or credential. No specific education requirement.
1 year full-time working experience in specialized knowledge area	Professional resume and one letter of recommendation (on organization letterhead and dated within last six months)
40 hours documented experience teaching adults	Professional resume and one letter of recommendation (on organization letterhead and dated within last six months)
Required score on professional development unit	Professional development unit submission scored by trainer approval board
Pre-service trainer requirements*	Evidence of completion of 6 online modules
15 hours of continuing education related to adult learning/early care and education/education each year or one, 3 credit college course every other year	Certificates of completion verified by MERIT
Core Competency demonstration document	Core Competency demonstration document reviewed/approved by trainer approval board
Approval Status: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Approved to train in specific levels and areas of the Core Competencies designated by the trainer approval board. ✓ Approved as a specialist trainer for 3 years. A new application is required for renewal. 	

**The pre-service trainer requirements include online modules in: Washington State Core Competencies, The Early Learning Guidelines, Learning Objectives and Assessment for Adult Learners, Cultural Competency, Technology (MERIT), Early Learning Update for Washington*

TIMELINE:

All new trainers who were *not* STARS-approved trainers during the transition from the STARS database to the Managed Education and Registry Information Tool (MERIT) will apply under the new trainer approval process starting January 1, 2012.

All current STARS-approved trainers are automatically granted a provisional approval status starting January 1, 2012 so there is no lag in the current system. All current STARS-approved trainers will apply for renewal under the new trainer approval process by September 1, 2012. Although a provisional status will be granted, we encourage current trainers to submit documentation and complete applications and pre-service requirements before the September 1, 2012 deadline.



3. How does the application process work?

- a. All prospective trainers apply through MERIT at merit.del.wa.gov.
- b. Trainers complete an application online, sign a quality assurance agreement and upload a professional resume.
- c. As part of the application, trainers are required to complete the online professional development unit example.
- d. Prospective trainers will forward all necessary supporting documentation to DEL including original transcripts to verify education, copies of certificates or credentials, and letter(s) of recommendation on official letterhead from the past 6 months.
- e. Once an application and supporting paperwork is received, DEL MERIT staff will screen all applicants and prepare the final application package for the trainer approval board.
- f. The trainer approval board meets on a regularly scheduled basis to review and approve applications.

- g. Once a trainer is approved at a given trainer level, this information is automatically entered into MERIT and trainers can submit training sessions which will display in the online training calendar. All trainers are approved for three years at a time.

4. What additional requirements are necessary to complete an application?

All prospective trainers must complete the online pre-service requirements prior to application approval. The six online modules include:

- Washington State's Core Competencies
- Washington State's Early Learning Guidelines
- Cultural Competency
- Learning and Assessment for Adult Learners
- MERIT for Trainers
- Early Learning Update for Washington

These modules set a foundation for all trainers to work from a common framework. Additionally, in order to assess the quality of training around the state, we need to establish common standards and link each training to the Washington State Core Competencies and Early Learning Guidelines. The convenience of the online platform will allow all trainers to complete these pre-service modules in their own time.

5. Who can apply for the specialist trainer level?

The specialist category serves two primary functions:

- To encourage trainers from outside the field of early care & education to train in special topic areas such as nutrition, mental health, and business to allow professionals access to cross-disciplinary knowledge.
- To encourage applicants who do not necessarily fulfill educational requirements but have an important skill to share such as a specialization with a particular cultural group, training expertise in another language, and/or trainers with vast experience in specific topic areas.

All specialty trainers are approved to train in particular areas and levels of the Core Competencies.

6. What is the trainer approval board?

The trainer approval board is made up of a diverse group of experts who share the same commitment to high-quality training for professionals. This includes organizations and members of higher education, community-based training, state agencies and other professional organizations. The trainer approval board meets at regularly scheduled times throughout the year to review applications and approve trainers.

The goal for Washington is to encourage advanced trainers who have been approved to train for at least two years under the new approval process to take over the functions of the trainer approval board and build leadership capacity within our current pool of state-approved trainers.

7. What are the benefits of becoming a state-approved trainer?

Together, with partners and leaders, we aim to promote the accessibility of high-quality educational opportunities that meet the diverse professional development needs of those who work with children and families. State-approved trainers:

- Are able to advertise trainings around the state.
- Can use MERIT to capture all training data. MERIT will help trainers track attendance, complete training rosters, and print training histories. MERIT will even send automatic email reminders to complete the training process.
- Are recognized for their expertise and ability to provide high-quality professional development experiences for adults.
- Highlight the leadership and importance of trainers in our professional development system.

8. How will trainers be approved to deliver the 20 Hour Basic STARS training and continuing education trainings that meet the annual 10 Hour requirement?

The new trainer approval process will change the way that trainers are approved. In the past, trainers could apply to provide the 20 Hour Basic STARS training and/or provide training to meet the annual state requirement of 10 hours of continuing education. Under the new process:

- Approved trainers at the apprentice, intermediate and advanced levels can all provide the 20 Hour Basic STARS training and provide continuing education training in all areas of the new Core Competencies. However, depending on the level of approval (apprentice, intermediate or advanced), trainers will be approved to train at specific levels of the Core Competencies, which will impact the level of training material for continuing education trainings.
- Approved Specialist trainers will be approved to train in specific competency areas at specific levels of the Core Competencies. This will most likely impact the continuing education trainings that link to the new Core Competencies.

9. How are training organizations affected by the new trainer approval process?

Training organizations will no longer be approved under the new process. In order to ensure that a consistent and measureable quality assurance process is built, DEL is requiring all trainers to individually submit a state-approved trainer application. Training organizations will still be able to support trainers in the following ways:

- Trainers will be able to link to and affiliate with organizations. Additionally, professionals will still be able to search for trainings by organization through this linkage.
- Organizations will still be able to administratively support trainers. Trainers can designate that an administrative contact help to complete required steps in MERIT.
- Organizations will be able to access reports on trainers that are working for the organization.

10. What courses/training fulfill the 15 hours of continuing education for trainers?

The following material will meet the continuing education requirements for approved trainers:

Training or coursework in adult learning, early childhood education or broad education that relates to children/youth and the Core Competencies. STARS hours will also fulfill the continuing education requirement.

11. How do instructors of higher education join the trainer approval system?

DEL encourages faculty in higher education to join the system in order to more accurately track who is offering professional development opportunities across our state. There is a specific application available in MERIT for instructors of higher education. This is a fast-track application that is significantly shorter than the standard trainer level applications. We do ask that instructors of higher education complete the online modules and demonstrate that they have taught for at least two consecutive terms at an institution.

12. How will STARS hours be offered for early learning or school-age conferences and visiting speakers?

There is an application available in MERIT for conferences and special events. An organization or entity must sponsor the event and complete an application at least three weeks prior to the event. This application is a very quick form that asks for information on the session and presenter. If there is more than one session, the sponsoring entity must complete brief information on each session in order to accurately grant STARS hours. The sponsoring organization must also agree to complete the training roster(s) after the event to connect this training to participants' training histories.

13. How is my direct service with children verified?

Direct service with children is a requirement of apprentice, intermediate and advanced trainer levels. There is no time requirement for when this experience was acquired and it is verified by a trainer's professional resume.

14. Is there a current fee for trainer applicants?

There is no current fee to apply to become a state-approved trainer. After September 1, 2012, a small fee will be assessed to apply to become a state-approved trainer and to renew an approved trainer status every three years.

15. How do I demonstrate that I meet the adult education experience requirements?

Adult education experience is required of all trainer levels. For apprentice, intermediate, advanced and specialist trainers; a particular number of hours is required for approval. These hours could have been attained through training adults, instructing at a college or higher education institute, coaching or mentoring adults and/or other experiences that demonstrate responsibility for the professional development of other adults. This information is verified by the trainer applicant's professional resume.